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10/661,638	09/15/2003	Jiro Hiraiwa	242742US3	8007

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EXAMINER

ZHENG, LOIS L

ART UNIT	PAPER NUMBER
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1742

DATE MAILED: 07/24/2006

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/661,638

Applicant(s)

HIRAIWA ET AL.

Examiner

Lois Zheng

Art Unit

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 05 May 2006.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 1-8 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a) ☐ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Notice of References Cited (PTO-892) | 4) <input type="checkbox"/> Interview Summary (PTO-413) |
| 2) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) | Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____ |
| 3) <input type="checkbox"/> Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO-1449 or PTO/SB/08) | 5) <input type="checkbox"/> Notice of Informal Patent Application (PTO-152) |
| Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____ | 6) <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

DETAILED ACTION

Status of Claims

1. Claims 1-2, 4-5 and 7-8 are amended in view of the amendment filed on 5 May 2006. Therefore, claims 1-8 remain under examination.

Status of Previous Objections

2. The rejection of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C.102(b), as being anticipated by Moulthrop, Jr. et al. US 5,980,726(Moulthrop), are withdrawn in view of the amendment.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

3. Claim 1 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention.

Claim 1 recites at least two compartments in the fluorine gas generator. Claim 1 also recites using "a compartment" to house the electrolyzer, "a compartment" to house the first adsorption unit, and "a compartment" to house the second adsorption unit. Since the all the compartments are addressed using the same language, it is unclear that all of the "a compartment" are directed to the same compartment, or two, or three different compartments, which renders the instant claim indefinite.

The instant claim is interpreted to mean three different compartments, each separately houses the electrolyzer, the first adsorption unit and the second adsorption unit. If this is what applicant intended to claim, the examiner suggest to amend the claims to "a first compartment containing said electrolyzer", "a second compartment

containing a first adsorption unit" and "a third compartment containing a second adsorption unit".

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claims 1-8 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over WO 01/77412 in view of Marumo et al. US 4,790,859(Marumo), and further in view of JP2000-160390(JP'390).

The rejection grounds are based on WO 01/77412. However, the examiner will rely on the teachings of Tojo et al. US 6,518,105 B2(Tojo'105) when discussing the details of the rejection since Tojo'105 is the National Stage Entry and an English equivalent of WO 01/77412 which is in Japanese.

Tojo'105 teaches a fluorine gas generator for generating high purity fluorine gas by electrolysis of a mixed molten-salt comprising hydrogen fluoride(abstract). The fluorine gas generator of Tojo'105 comprises an electrolytic cell which is separated into an anode chamber and a cathode chamber(abstract, Fig. 1 numerals 5 and 7).

Tojo'105 further teaches that the fluorine gas generator comprises absorption towers to downstream from the hydrogen and fluorine gases outlet to remove excess HF from the hydrogen gas and the fluorine gas(col. 6 lines 14-19). Fig. 1 of Tojo'105 appears to shown that the fluorine gas generator has box-shaped body.

However, the absorption towers of Tojo'105 do not explicitly read on the claimed first and second adsorption units. In addition, Tojo'105 does not explicitly teach the at least two compartments for housing the electrolyzer and the adsorption units.

Marumo teaches an apparatus for separating gaseous mixtures containing a first and a second gas having different chemical compositions(abstract). The gas separation apparatus of Marumo teaches using two adsorption towers to provide an efficient separation of a gas mixture(col. 2 lines 41-42, col. 11 lines 53-55). Marumo further teaches that the first adsorption tower is being used to separate the gas mixture while the adsorbent in the second adsorption tower is being regenerated. Later on, the process is switch where the second adsorption tower is used to separate the gas mixture while the adsorbent in the first adsorption tower is being regenerated(col. 12 lines 6-63).

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have incorporated the gas mixture separation apparatus of Marumo with the dual adsorption tower setup into the fluorine gas generator of Tojo'105 to remove the HF from the hydrogen gas and the fluorine gas in order to achieve efficient separation of the gas mixture as taught by Marumo and to minimize the adsorption tower down time by using one adsorption tower for gas separation while allowing the adsorbent regeneration to take place in the other adsorption tower as taught by Marumo.

JP'390 teaches placing an electrochemical plating device and the control system in separate chambers in order to avoid contamination of the electrochemical plating

Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have incorporated the multi-compartment housing of JP'390 into the apparatus of Tojo'105 in view of Marumo to house the electrolyzer, the first adsorption unit and the second adsorption unit separately in order to avoid cross contamination (abstract, paragraph [0017]).

Regarding claims 1-2, the fluorine gas generator of Tojo'105 in view of Marumo and JP'390 meets the limitations of the instant claims.

Regarding claim 3, Tojo'105 further teaches an exhaust opening (Fig. 1 numeral 19) to provide controlled atmosphere for the interior of the fluorine gas generator (col. 8 lines 16-18). Therefore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have incorporated an exhaust opening (i.e. suction opening) to each of the three compartments of the fluorine gas generator in order to provide a controlled interior atmosphere in each of the electrolyzer and the hydrogen and fluorine gas post-treatment processing sections.

Regarding claim 4, Tojo'105 further teaches a buffer tank (Fig. 1 numeral 44) and a pressurizer (Fig. 1 numeral 42). Even though the buffer tank (i.e. reservoir means) and the pressurizer of Tojo'105 are located outside of the box-shaped housing instead of within the second compartment as claimed and the pressurizer of Tojo'105 locates upstream of the buffer tank instead of downstream from the buffer tank as claimed, one of ordinary skill in the art would have found the claimed reservoir and pressurizer locations obvious since it is well settled that rearrangement of parts is an obvious matter of design choice. In re Kuhle, 526 F.2d 553, 188 USPQ 7 (CCPA 1975). In addition,

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the buffer tank and the pressurizer of Tojo'105 differs from the instant invention only in their locations, which is unpatentable because shifting the locations of the buffer tank and the pressurizer of Tojo'105 would not have modified the operation of the buffer tank and the pressurizer. In re Japikse, 181 F.2d 1019, 86 USPQ 70 (CCPA 1950). See MPEP 2144.04. Furthermore, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art to have incorporated the buffer tank and the pressurizer of Tojo'105 in view of Marumo and JP'390 inside the same compartment for post-treatment of fluorine gas discharge(i.e. second compartment) in order to protect the buffer tank and the pressurizer from potentially hazardous environment and conditions.

Regarding claim 5, Tojo'105 teaches that a heater is used to provide proper heating of the electrolytic cell and the heater make take any form(col. 6 lines 53-67). Even though Tojo'105 in view of Marumo and JP'390 do not explicitly teach that the heater is water heating device as claimed, one of ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to have used an water heating device in the heater of Tojo'105 in view of Marumo and JP'390 since an water heating device is an well known low cost heating device.

Regarding claim 6, even though Tojo'105 in view of Marumo and JP'390 do not explicitly teach that the electrolyzer is mounted on a transporting member, one of ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to have mounted the electrolytic cell of Tojo'105 in view of Marumo and JP'390 on a transporting member capable of moving the electrolytic cell in and out of the fluorine gas generator in order to allow easy access

to the electrolytic cell for routine maintenance such as cleaning and replacement of parts.

Regarding claims 7-8, the adsorption unit of Tojo'105 in view of Marumo and JP'390 comprises two adsorption columns and can be operated alone as claimed. In addition, even though Tojo'105 in view of Marumo and JP'390 do not explicitly teach that the adsorption columns are mounted on transporting members as claimed, one of ordinary skill in the art would have found it obvious to have mounted the adsorption columns of Tojo'105 in view of Marumo on transporting members capable of moving the adsorption columns in and out of the first and second compartments in order to allow easy access to the adsorption columns for routine maintenance such as cleaning and replacement of parts.

Response to Arguments

6. Applicant's arguments filed 5 May 2006 have been considered but are moot in view of the new grounds of rejections.

Conclusion

7. The prior art made of record and not relied upon is considered pertinent to applicant's disclosure.

Tseng et al. US 6,656,334 B2(Tseng) teaches an electrolysis cell comprising a compartment for housing the electrolysis cell and other compartments for housing other components of the electrolysis system.

8. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP

§ 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Lois Zheng whose telephone number is (571) 272-1248. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:30am - 5:00pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Roy King can be reached on (571) 272-1244. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 703-872-9306.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

LLZ


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